

## Mary Lou Terrien

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**From:** Amy Casteel <casteel.amy@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 5, 2016 7:41 AM  
**To:** Mary Lou Terrien  
**Subject:** HCR 28 community response

Ms. Terrin,

Will you please send the open letter below to the Local Government Committee before their hearing on HCR 28 this week? It is important that our legislators, when debating the merits of this resolution, consider the legal terminology which they are addressing. It is also important that our legislators are aware that there is a strong community coalition of people who are actively involved in making our state a place of welcome, helping newcomers to navigate the differences in culture at work, at home, and at school. Should the committee members wish to contact me directly, they may do so through email at [casteel.amy@gmail.com](mailto:casteel.amy@gmail.com) or by phone 517-525-3078, however I would prefer that my contact information remain private so please do not publish it along with the letter.

Thank you for helping us all have a voice in our government,  
Amy Casteel

Dear Representative McCready,

Lansing has, for some time now, been a welcoming community. I have personally been involved in several community programs working directly with refugees and asylum seekers. From unaccompanied minors, to adult women and men, to teens I have watched these resilient, resourceful, and driven new Americans seek to make their lives and the communities around them better. In one South Lansing neighborhood which has come to consist of either low income renters, the elderly, and one motorcycle gang, the vacant houses have become the first homes for several families who arrived as refugees. They are revitalizing that neighborhood and that school.

These same families -- yes, families -- are now afraid. Teens I have been involved with for over 5 years are frightened of school, frightened that their new community will turn on them. Make no mistake, these families lived through horrific circumstances twice before. First their own countries turned on them, violently taking their property, their businesses, their schools, and the lives of their loved ones. Second in the country where they sought asylum, they were herded into camps and treated as objects of hatred and scorn by the "host" country. We are the third country for these families.

The language being used is pandering to a certain comfortable, but ignorant, mindset without regard for the trauma it is instilling in people to whom we pledged refuge and peace.

To legislate from a posture of fear, is to legislate from a posture of weakness. HCR 28 is not in the best interest of our state. We need the energy, vitality, and creativity which new citizens bring.

This resolution also shows a lack of knowledge or understanding of the legal process of immigration and the terms. The refugee designation is a legal designation which must first be granted by the UN High Commission on Refugees, an up to 18 month process. Only then are refugees given the opportunity to sit with sponsor countries who now engage in a second vetting process. Our current process also takes, on average, another 18 months. This can be verified at <https://www.uscis.gov/refugeescreening>

No one who arrives in this country as a refugee gets a "free" ticket. In fact, they have to pay back the US government for those plane fares.

Now, if you want to address those who are applying to the US directly, that process is the asylum seeker process. An asylee is a person who has not been designated as a refugee by the United Nations. Instead, they apply for asylum directly to a US Customs officer at an embassy, at a consulate, or at the border. Asylum seekers who apply at the border are admitted into the country on a provisional visa and go through the vetting process after arrival. If this is the process which concerns you, amend the resolution to address the correct legal immigration status.

It is time that our legislators put an end to the fear-mongering. Please consider all Americans, those born into citizenry and those who choose it, when setting policy.